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Towards Gonzo Anthropology: Ethnography as Cultural Performance

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Abstract

This essay provides an "ethnography of ethnography" through investigating and advocating certain research methodologies referred to as "Gonzo Anthropology." Ethnography is viewed as a process entailing both actual research, especially participant observation, and discourse, i.e. some form of cultural representation. In this way the ethnographic process can be seen as a form of cultural performance; the ethnographer is an actor, director, recorder of events, writer, artist and audience all in one. These ideas will be explored through an analysis of the work of Hunter S. Thompson, the founder of gonzo methods. The application of performance theory will be illustrated through brief cultural descriptions of Hare Krishnas and deaf people in Japan. This essay is a product of years of study, application, consideration and reconsiderations of ethnographic research that aims to provide important, relevant and interesting dialogue for multiple and multivocal actors and audiences.

Keywords: ethnography, cultural performance, Hunter S. Thompson, Gonzo Anthropology

Prologue 1995

I am obsessed, completely focused on this thing to the point where I have an extreme sense of denial towards other responsibilities. "Buy the ticket, take the ride… and if it occasionally gets a little heavier than what you had in mind, well… maybe chalk it off to forced *consciousness expansion*: Tune in, freak out…" (Thompson 1971: 89) …Total Gonzo Anthropology.

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Before me are books, articles, papers and computer disks tossed about in makeshift piles of organization and reorganization. I've been up for days on end absorbing this stuff and

drinking strong coffee to stay awake, alert and focused. Overdue bills are tossed to the side, clothes are scattered throughout the apartment, garbage and dirty dishes are overflowing from my kitchen, the kitty litter box is in dire need of changing. The phone is off the hook, the curtains and blinds are drawn shut to isolate me. I have every light and appliance on in the apartment pushing the circuit breaker to the limit; some hippie-grunge music recently purchased on a fieldtrip to Seattle in blaring from my stereo. It's amazing anyone can work under these conditions but for those like me, this atmosphere is vital. Tension and nervousness (caffeine jitters?) run rampant; indeed, Gonzo Anthropology is not always a pretty picture (nor does it smell particularly sweet at this moment…).

Prologue 2012

On November 15, 2012, at the 111th Annual Meetings of the American Anthropological Association in San Francisco, Barbara Tedlock presented a paper entitled "Gonzo Ethnography." The paper, influenced by the work of Hunter S. Thompson and other practitioners of gonzo enterprises, discusses autoethnography, documentary forms and Tedlock's own obsession with "the strange enterprise of doing and writing ethnography [which] has emerged from within the narrative shaping and analysis of human experience and vulnerability" (Tedlock 2012: 2).

When I was developing and writing my own treatise on Gonzo Anthropology in graduate school, the reaction of most of my professors was polite but discouraging, ranging from "interesting - but I assume that you will not be publishing this essay" to "why are you willing to commit professional suicide?" The influence of Thompson seemed to be too much for the anthropology of 1990s (with the notable exception of one professor I worked with who fashioned his office door nameplate to read "Dr. X, Gonzo Anthropologist." He later changed it to read "Dr. X, the Dennis Rodman of Anthropology.").

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If such a well-known and respected anthropologist as Tedlock was now discussing the commonalities of Thompson's work and ethnographic research, perhaps it was time to dig out my old essay…

Introduction

Gonzo: 1) extreme, excessive, unorthodox. 2) total immersion, "being there" (Geertz 1988)

Anthropology: (for the purposes of this essay, cultural anthropology: "I don't dig bones, I dig live people, man." 1) the study of humans. 2) the process of doing ethnography.

Ethnography: 1) "synthetic cultural description based upon participant observation" (Clifford 1988 [1983]: 30). 2) the anthropological process encompassing methodology, especially fieldwork/participant-observation, and the writing up/presentation of the "final product" (also referred to as an ethnography).

What exactly is "Gonzo Anthropology"? Is it theory? methodology? philosophy? all of these things? Or is it a marketing scheme on my part to distinguish me from the seemingly infinite hoards of other anthropologists? While I advocate certain methods and beliefs inherent to Gonzo Anthropology to my peers, do I really want anyone else other than me to do Gonzo Anthropology?

This essay contains ideas from the early days of my anthropological training, definitely rooted in the post-*Writing Culture* (Clifford and Marcus 1986) period of the late 1980s and early 1990s. In graduate school I was practicing/performing and experimenting with various ethnographic methodologies, mostly dealing with Vaisnava *bhakti* movements (Hare Krishnas) in North America. I encountered many ethical dilemmas in the field and was keenly following similar debates in the anthropological literature: is ethnography science or humanistic art? objective or subjective? holistic or fragmentary? serving the interests of the self or the other? I came to view such categories not as opposites or extremes in a continuum but rather as artificial categories created for the ease of academic organization and discourse – fragments with inherent contradictions. Ethnography might fit into all or some of these categories, or rather all or some of these categories might make up ethnography. In 1966, Gerald Berreman discussed some of these issues in his *Anemic and Emetic Analysis in Social Anthropology*:

> It can often be phrased, and often has been treated as a dilemma: how to be scientific and at the same time retain the humanistic insights – the human relevance – without which no account of human beings make sense (346).
>
> What I call for, in short, if verification is to be enhanced, is a *sociology of ethnography; an ethnography of ethnography* (350).

This calling became my task. Granted, many anthropologists and social scientists whose works I studied in graduate school address these problems from a variety of perspectives. I was especially influenced by Wolf 1964; Wax 1971; Rabinow 1977, 1986, Spradely 1980; Georges and Jones 1980; Clifford 1986, 1988 [1983]; Tyler 1986, Marcus and Fischer 1986; Geertz 1988 and Bernard 1994. This essay is an updated proposal of my own ideas of ethnography, namely I suggest that ethnography as a process is a form of cultural performance. These ideas will be illustrated through an analysis of selected works of Hunter S. Thompson and from my own early work with Hare Krishnas. Most of the text here comes from my paper crafted in 1995; however in this draft I polish certain passages, add some current ideas and include an analysis of my more recent research with deaf people in Japan. Specifically, in this essay I will 1) define "Gonzo Anthropology" by considering its origins and influences, and 2) discuss performance theory and illustrate its relevance to ethnography.

Ⅰ. "Gonzo Anthropology" and the Influence of Hunter S. Thompson

For me, the term "gonzo" comes from the work of Dr. Hunter S. Thompson, the noted author and journalist. Thompson is probably best known for his *Fear and Loathing in Las Vegas* – subtitled "A Savage Journey into the Heart of the American Dream" (1971) – an admitted failed experiment in in "true Gonzo Journalism" but perhaps a true rendering of the Las Vegas Cultural Experience in the early 1970s. What I consider a successful example of Gonzo Journalism is Thompson's earlier work, *Hell's Angels*, subtitled "The Strange and Terrible Saga of the Outlaw Motorcycle Gangs" (1965-66). Not only is *Hell's Angels* an example of Gonzo Journalism, it is Gonzo Anthropology as well because of the extent of Thompson's involvement via research and participant-observation, and because of his style of discourse (illuminating, emulating, multivocal: interesting and relevant). But I am getting ahead of myself here. What is Gonzo Journalism? In Thompson's own words:

> It is a style of "reporting" based on William Faulkner's idea that the best fiction is far more *true* than any kind of journalism – and the best journalists have always known this. Which is not to say that Fiction is necessarily "more true" than Journalism – or vice versa – but that both "fiction" and "journalism" are artificial categories; and that both forms, at their best, are only two different means to the same end. This is getting pretty heavy… (1979:120)

… and anticipating Clifford's discussion of ethnographic writings, which

> can properly be called fictions in the sense of "something made or fashioned," the principal burden of the word's Latin root, *fingere*. But it is important to preserve the meaning not merely of making, but also of making up, of inventing things not really actually real. (*Fingere*, in some of its uses, implied a degree of falsehood.) Interpretive social scientists have recently come to view good ethnographies as "true fictions," but usually at the cost of weakening the oxymoron, reducing it to the banal claim that all truths are constructed (Clifford 1986: 6).

Clifford is interested in keeping the "oxymoron sharp" (*Ibid.*) as is Thompson:

> The writing would be selective & necessarily interpretive – but once the image was written, the words would be final… But this is a hard thing to do, and in the end I found myself imposing an essentially fictional framework on what began as a piece of straight/crazy journalism. True Gonzo reporting needs the talents of a master journalist, the eye of an artist/photographer and the heavy balls of an actor. Because the writer *must* be a participant in the scene, while he's writing it… Probably the closest analogy to the ideal would be a film director/producer who writes his won scripts, does his own camera work and somehow manages to film himself in action… (Thompson 1979:120)

Ⅱ. Towards Gonzo Anthropology: Analysis of Hell's Angels

In an ideal sense, Gonzo Journalism and Gonzo Anthropology entail a commitment to total immersion within the culture of study and adhere to a definition of participant

observation I am fond of quoting:

> For our purposes, we define participant observation as a process in which the observer's presence in a social situation is maintained for the purpose of scientific investigation. The observer is in a face-to-face relationship with the observed, and, by participating with them in their natural life setting, he gathers data. Thus, the observer is part of the context being studied, and he both modifies and is influenced by this context (Schwartz and Schwartz 1955: 344).

While some might question *Hell's Angels* as science, it does illustrate a successful practice of participant observation and serves as a fine example of ethnography. Thompson's research and analyses are thorough, moving beyond journalism and its claim of objectivity. Thompson does not hide his position within his research: his perceptions, beliefs and "voice" are clearly identified throughout his discourse. However this is one voice, albeit a primary/soloist one, within a chorus of others. Multiple perspectives and voices arise out of *Hell's Angels*: insider/emic views and quotes via interviews with bikers and outside/etic views via interviews with law enforcement officials and "citizens" (non-Angels), newspaper accounts, documented government and police agency reports and even some (brief) citations of sociological theory. In addition, Thompson had over one year of participant observation, the extreme sense of "being there" well beyond Malinowski's total immersion (Geertz 1988) that is exceptional and noteworthy:

> My dealings with the Angles lasted about a year, and never really ended. I came to know some of them well and most of them well enough to relax with. But at first – due to numerous warnings – I was nervous even drinking [with them] (Thompson 1965-66: 63).

> …I had become so involved in the outlaw scene that I was no longer sure whether I was doing research on the Hell's Angels or being slowly absorbed by them… In the beginning I kept them out of my own world, but after several months my friends grew accustomed to finding Hell's Angles in my apartment any hour of the day or night (*Ibid*., 66).

Back in the 1990s the idea of "going native" within anthropological fieldwork was fiercely debated. What I consider to be a trend of the time espoused a desire for "complete immersion," becoming a part of the culture of study in order to gain an emic understanding. Admittedly Gonzo Anthropology is idealistic but not to the point where "going native" is naïve. An ethnographer often adopts some "native" habits (I have certainly done this after fifteen years in Japan) but can never really become a "native" per se. A complete immersion is not possible for the ethnographer because he "relies heavily upon his experiences [from] his own culture for deciding the events he witnesses" (Cicourel 1964: 53). That is not to say that the ethnographer cannot become part of the society he studies. Going back to Schwartz and Schwartz (1955: 344), the anthropologist/participant observer "modifies" at least the context of the research setting. Thus the ethnographer can become a part of the society he studies, but not part of the culture. This, Thompson learned the hard way:

> On Labor Day 1966, I pushed my luck a little too far and got badly stomped by four or five Angels who seemed to feel I was taking advantage of them. A minor disagreement suddenly became very serious. None of those who did me were among the group I considered my friends – but they were Angels, and that was enough to cause many of the others to participate after one of the brethren teed off on me… The first blow was launched with no hint of warning… within seconds I was clubbed from behind by the Angel I'd been talking to just a moment earlier (Thompson 1965-66: 346).

Was Thompson taking advantage of the Angels? He received money and notoriety through the information he took from the Angels. Was his a position of privilege and power as opposed to the subjugated and weak Angels? Postmodern dogma of the 1990s might present such a situation. No social scientist was immune to postmodernism and to an extent Gonzo Anthropology is influenced by the extreme questioning of modernist practices; these influences include striving for multivocality and discourse by including multiple perspectives/realities, utilizing poetic/aesthetic devices and sharing research methods and context. Gonzo Anthropology does not dwell upon power dynamics to the extent that postmodernism does, nor does it suffer from the extreme questioning of the established paradigm of anthropology. Power and privilege in the field is situational and not fixed. While not disregarding the colonial origins of anthropology, Gonzo Anthropology has moved on to elevate/support/endorse ethnographic methods as collaborative forms of learning, communication, cultural

interpretation and sharing knowledge in an attempt to reduce misunderstanding and conflict. Gonzo Anthropology recognizes the collaborative nature of ethnography, multiple audiences (including a so-called "native" one), multiple ways of comprehending/learning and incorporates discourse using such things as poetic and aesthetic devices. The process of ethnography is a constant negotiation with those being studied and those gleaning information from the study. The goal is to make anthropology understandable, accessible, interesting and relevant to more than academics.

Ⅲ. Performance Theory and Gonzo Anthropology

I would like to switch gears for a moment and discuss aspects of performance theory and its influence/relevance upon ethnography and Gonzo Anthropology. I borrow various aspects of performance theory from Erving Goffman (1973 [1959]); Victor Turner (1986, with Edith Turner 1982) and Richard Schechner (1985, 1988). Performance theory examines "expressions of shared cultural understanding in behavior" (Turner and Turner 1982: 33) and strives for an

> understanding of how people in other cultures experience the richness of their social existence, what the moral pressures are upon them, what kinds of pleasures they expect to receive as a reward for following certain patterns of action, and how they express joy, grief, deference, and affection in accordance with cultural expectations (*Ibid.*).

More simply put, it is a way of perceiving culture through examining performance, the actors and audience and the outcomes of the performance.

A performance is an exhibition, "an activity done by an individual or group in the presence of another individual or group" (Schechner 1988: 30). What differentiates performance from normal behavior is the responsibility assumed in front of an audience (Hymes 1975: 18). This definition is intentionally broad so as to encompass many events such as theatrical drama, music, dance, art, ritual, "real life" social dramas (Turner 1986) and the "presentation of self in everyday life" (Goffman 1973 [1959]).

A model of cultural performance I have been working with strives for emic and etic understanding by examining front region (what the audience is intended to see) and back region (what goes on behind the scene – events the audience are not usually privy to)

activities/domains (Goffman 1973 [1959]). Singer writes of cultural performances as "units of observation" from the perspective of the audience having "definite time spans, or at least a beginning and an end, an organized program of activity, a set of performers, an audience and a set place and occasion" (1972: 71). Schechner (1985, 1988) views cultural performance from the actor's perspective and sees seven distinct phases: 1) training, 2) workshop, 3) rehearsal, 4) preparation, 5) the performance proper, 6) cool-down and 7) aftermath.

Applying such a model to cultural performances has great potential for exposing cultural behavior, beliefs and cosmologies; for the purposes of this essay I want to apply it to the process of ethnography itself. While others have used performance theory in a number of ways, to my knowledge no one has seen ethnography itself as a cultural performance. Clifford comes the closest, seeing "ethnography as a performance emplotted by powerful stories" (1986: 989, however he is coming from a literary approach, viewing ethnography as the "final written product," (i.e. discourse only). On the other hand, many treat ethnography as primarily research methodologies. I see ethnography as a process entailing both research/fieldwork methodologies and discourse. Such a process is consistent with Singer's cultural performance qualities and Schechner's phases.

Performance theory within anthropology and sociology has examined performance as a subject (analyzing a particular ritual or event and its actor/participants, c.f. Fabian 1990); it has been used as methodology (i.e. staging/performing a ritual or play to gain a participant's perspective, c.f. Turner and Turner 1982; Jackson 1993; Allen and Garner 1995); it has also been used as a means to convey research results (c.f. McCall and Becker; their presentation was a staged dialogue, their written article was in the form of a script complete with stage directions). Berg describes interviewing as dramaturgical in nature, where the interview itself is a social performance; the interviewer in order to extract data from a certain audience works as an actor, director and choreographer (2009: 101-157).

Gonzo Anthropology strives to use performance theory in a number of ways in varying degrees. The main subject in Gonzo Anthropology is a particular performance/event and its actors/participants; the ethnographer is thrown into this mix as a researcher/actor/audience interacting in the culture of study. The result of this style of performance is a gonzo quality of discourse whether it be written text, visual representation (a film, photo project or other artistic form) and/or oral presentation. Recognition of the process of ethnography with its overlapping frames of performance, actors and audience is vital for Gonzo Anthropology. Gonzo Anthropology entails the ethnographic process as a whole – one cannot do gonzo

methodologies and come with traditional discourse, nor can one use traditional methods to come up with gonzo discourse.

Valentine and Matsumoto come close to gonzo with their crafting of "cultural performance analysis spheres" as a methodology to research cultural performances. Their focus is on interacting spheres including cultural context, setting, analysis, performers and the performance itself; the ethnographer is seen as "the one [sphere] most removed from the dynamic center of the performance event" (2001: 72). Their application of this model to describe a Chinese New Year parade in San Francisco is successful in terms of their goal of conveying multiple cultural contexts: "The ethnography should be written in such a way that readers and/or the affiliated members of the performing organization can more easily hear/see/read/evaluate the quality of the performative ethnography" (2001: 85).

In the following two sections I present my own attempts at Gonzo Anthropology, where the ethnographer is in the thick of things (i.e. thrust into the dynamic center) and offer some explanation/analysis.

Ⅳ. Emulation 1993: Intimate Touches of Hare Krishna Life

6:15 PM on a Saturday night on upper Haight Street in San Francisco: walking around twilight, the Haight has a magical glow about it – bright colored neon lights and on-coming cars' headlights mix to make my vision blurry. A lot of people are out and having a similar vision problem I suspect, because everyone's an anthropologist tonight, examining the "others" in the Haight, or checking out the freaks. But I have a college degree to do this and I am working on another one; this Saturday night I'm not out cruising the scene, I'm here to score some ethnography.

Smells of various foods, incense, marijuana, urine, body odor and car fumes intermingle. People are hustling and bustling, smoking, talking, shouting, playing music…

A cling-clang-clang-cling *rises above the city noise in syncopated rhythms. I walk up the street towards the sound. There's a scene at the corner of Haight and Masonic drawing much attention. It's no bust though (no cops on this block – looks like I'll be getting some of that ethnography after all), it's the Hare Krishnas…*

Dancing and chanting the names of their Lord, bald-headed men in dhotis *and women in brightly colored* saris *praise God through their performance. The chanting is in a call and response fashion accompanied by double-sided drums, finger cymbals and gongs. The*

pack moves across the street and I follow along making observations – trying to take in the whole picture of the event, using myself like the lens of a camera, falling behind for wide angle shots, zooming in for close-ups – trying to be in the picture and outside of it at the same time. Outside the pack I can hear the whispers of dope dealers, "kind buds, doses…" As I move closer the whispers disappear – the sing-song chanting of "Hare Krishna, Hare Rama" becomes overwhelming. Many on-lookers smile and wave and honk their horns at the Hare Krishnas, some laugh, singling and dancing in mockery.

The pack stops at the corner of Haight and Ashbury, forms a circle in the street and increase the energy of their dancing/chanting; the devotees start jumping up and down, faster and wilder, blocking traffic and being in the way…

But this action is done on purpose. The Hare Krishnas are doing harinam*, congregational dancing and chanting in the streets, like they do every Saturday night in the Haight. This* harinam *is a form of worship; Krishna (God) enjoys the pastimes of His devotees as they perform for Him. Additionally,* harinam *is seen to remind others (non-devotees) of Krishna and serve as a form of missionary work.* (Fedorowicz 1993).

These are excerpts from an ethnographic paper I wrote during my graduate studies in San Francisco. The excerpts are intended to describe the Hare Krishnas doing a certain activity in a certain environment. The thesis of my paper is that within the Hare Krishna belief system, cultural performance strives to become cultural behavior. A true devotee's activities are always for the benefit of others, whether it be other devotees, non-devotees or Krishna/God. My discourse does not serve as "representation" (discourse coming from the anthropologist who acts as a representative of the culture he studies, c.f. Clifford 1988 [1983]) nor an "evocation" (where the anthropologist evokes aspects of a culture rather than claiming the power of representation, c.f. Tyler 1986), but as an *emulation*. In this way, emulation can be seen as an *attempt* to gain a deeper understanding of the culture being studied and incorporating this understanding into discourse. After spending three years conducting participant observation and interviews with Hare Krishna groups in Michigan, Toronto and the San Francisco Bay Area, I was able to gain a deep understanding of their beliefs. For example, I take great care in the above passage to describe the setting as an attempt to illustrate *maya*, an important concept within the Hare Krishna cosmology. *Maya* is an illusion, a force that masks "sacred realities" and Krishna/God Himself. The Hare Krishna devotee strives to overcome the distractions/temptations of *maya* in an attempt to gain Krishna consciousness. Haight Street is perhaps an example of extreme *maya* that

devotees must slice through (and help others to do so as well) to gain the benefits of Krishna consciousness. The above passage is also an attempt to employ aspects of the *Writing Culture*-style literary approach (Clifford and Marcus 1986).

Ⅴ. Emulation 2000: Driving with the Deaf in Japan

We are traveling fast down the narrow side streets of northern Osaka. I am sitting in the middle of the back seat of the car so that I can try to see the sign language of my two deaf companions in the front. It is difficult for me to fully understand because it is dark and the two men sign very quickly. Also, their signing styles are very different. Nakagawa, in the passenger seat, uses Japanese Sign Language (JSL). He does not speak while signing, uses rich facial expression and makes few sounds with his mouth. While I suspect Nakagawa can lipread, he has clearly expressed to me earlier his unwillingness to do so. Shiro, our driver, on the other hand communicates very differently. He wears a hearing aid (Nakagawa doesn't) and is very oral. He can speak, although it sounds a bit awkward and he seems to be very good at lipreading. His signing can be characterized as being closer to Signed Japanese rather than JSL; Shiro speaks and signs at the same time using a syntax that follows spoken Japanese (JSL's grammar and word order differs from spoken Japanese) and he tends to fingerspell many words rather than using standard JSL signs. As an academic observer I can identify and classify these linguistic differences, yet Shiro and Nakagawa have no difficulties understanding one another.

Shiro often stops suddenly on the busy street and swerves to avoid other vehicles, bicycles and pedestrians. I am a bit nervous as he seems to be watching and conversing with Nakagawa to his side as much as he is paying attention to the traffic situation. To make things worse (for the anthropologist/passenger), Shiro's cell phone vibrates/"rings" (actually it is a Southern All Stars *song ring-tone) and he digs it out of his pocket and begins to read and reply to a text message while still driving.*

This is the introduction to a paper I wrote during the early stages of my work with Japanese deaf people. At the time I had two major goals for the paper: to challenge preconceived notions and stereotypes of the deaf as merely "handicapped," and to demonstrate linguistic differences in sign language use in Japan. The former emphasizes a difference between hearing and deaf people (an attempt to describe a so-called "deaf culture") and the latter emphasizes differences between deaf people themselves. Issues of identity,

ideology and belonging are related to individuals believing themselves to be deaf (focus on the physical condition of deafness) or Deaf (a cultural group and/or linguistic minority). My focus is on specific case studies rather than macro analyses and has been described by one colleague as "street level" ethnography. Again, emulation is the key. This emulation within discourse (i.e. incorporation of experience/understanding into style of writing) is an important component of Gonzo Anthropology; discourse is based/dependent upon methodology. In this respect, within the process of ethnography, discourse can be seen as the "performance proper" (Schechner phase #5) while methodology can be seen as "preparation" (phase #4). I have found this ideology behind methodology to be similar to Stanislavski's "method" and Juhl's "Everyday Life Performances" used by actors to "get into character." Stanislavski's method involves

> Personal, internalized work using key concepts such as discovering the "given circumstances" of the character, maintaining "concentration of attention," exploring intentions or motivations of characters, and most prominently, asking actors to use "emotional memory" (Juhl 1993: 200).

Juhl expands upon this:

> For Everyday Life Performance exercises, actors listen to and watch people interacting in the world. Learning to become a good actor requires diligent and vigilant attention to the details of everyday life as raw materials for building characters and performances … Everyday Life Performance involves observing and exploring how others use their voices and bodies (*Ibid.*).

Good ethnography requires "diligent and vigilant attention to the details of everyday life" as well. This is the idea behind emulation and the basis for Gonzo Anthropology. The challenge with this model is that Schechner's phases are not static. Rather than a phase stopping and melding into the next, cycles of phases overlap and intertwine. "Cooling down" and dealing with the "aftermath" can cause a new cycle of "training" to begin. This is a part of the immersion involved in Gonzo Anthropology and the constant negotiations and re-negotiations inherent within the ethnographic process.

Conclusion 2013

The reader might still be asking, what is Gonzo Anthropology? This essay as an attempt to develop a certain theory-methodology-epistemology illustrates how difficult it is to pin it down. In a sense Gonzo Anthropology is about me – it is an ever-changing hodgepodge of influences, interests and experiences wrapped around ethnographic research. My early draft of this essay was concerned with legitimizing gonzo within anthropology – but is this really necessary? I think there has been a lot of gonzo in anthropology especially when the discipline is viewed historically. The ideas and approaches of Franz Boas were gonzo for the time; the total immersion of Bronislaw Malinowski was gonzo for the time; and the rapport building of Clifford Geertz during that infamous Balinese cockfight was gonzo for the time. In her "Gonzo Ethnography" paper Barbara Tedlock gives more current examples of gonzo. Contemporary anthropologists can now come out of the closet and admit our admiration of and influence from Hunter S. Thompson. While Thompson used and consumed whatever drug he could get his hands on to enhance his experiences (a form of emulation during fieldwork), we can get high from the performance of ethnography itself and continue to provide many more chronicles of Gonzo Anthropology.

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